

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENTS

Claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 11-13, 15, 16, 19-23, 26-28, and 31 have been amended for correct claim dependency and for clarity. Claims 9, 10, 24, 25, and 30 are canceled. Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 11-13, 15-23, 26-28, and 31 are active. No new matter is added.

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants thank Examiner Nguyen for the courteous and helpful discussion held with the Applicants' representatives on December 15, 2004. During this discussion, the rejections under 35 USC §112 were discussed. The Examiner noted that the claims would be favorably considered if the granulation step is positively required and the claims were restricted to the elected specie (sodium chloride).

The rejections of Claims 1, 2, 4-14, 28, 30, and 31 under 35 USC §112, first and second paragraph are respectfully traversed. Applicants direct the Examiner's attention to Claim 23, as originally-filed, page 20, lines 19-24, and page 22, lines 9-16 of the specification to demonstrate support for chemically treating *and* granulating. Furthermore, the amendments to the claims obviate the rejection under 35 USC §112, second paragraph. Withdrawal of the rejections is requested.

Applicants submit the application is now in condition for allowance. Early notification of such allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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